
EMPIRICAL ESTIMATION OF
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OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS SPILL-OVER
IN THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN ECONOMIES

DARKO LAZAROV AND GOCE PETRESKI

“Goce Delchev” University, Stip
and
“Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University, Skopje

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EMPIRICAL ESTIMATION OF TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS SPILL-OVER IN THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN ECONOMIES

Darko LAZAROV

PhD, Assistant Professor at “Goce Delchev” University, Faculty of Economics, Stip

Goce PETRESKI

PhD, Full Professor at “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University, Faculty of Economics, Skopje

Abstract: *The aim of the paper is to investigate the impact of financial crisis on the South-East European economies, throughout a series of econometric tests of a range of transmission mechanisms. Aggregate macroeconomic relationships might contain offset mechanisms (budget deficits, foreign and domestic debt increase). The framework of analysis has no an objective to look into the internal mechanics of growth of national economies, elasticity and substitutions, positions in income distribution, Okun’s law over the business cycle and related reverse linkages. Moreover, the paper has no ambitions to scrutinize the statistical or administrative and methodology changes domestic deficits, types of subsidies and other exogenous interventions in the incumbent period, which may significantly influence levels of any economic variables and consequently distort the general conclusions.*

Key words: financial crisis, South-East European economies, economic growth.

JEL classification: E32, F43

1. INTRODUCTION

Current financial crisis has lagged impact on peripheral economies’ growth rates, employment, fiscal performances and external accounts. The external shocks emanating from the crisis have caused downward output trends and macroeconomic instabilities with various amplitudes, due to different initial conditions, levels of openness and institutional response. Deteriorating export demand, declining foreign investment and more stringent external borrowing environment are the main economic impact channels, being the guiding line of incumbent research. The fiscal, social and monetary policy response, by and large differed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Limited number of studies in the academic literature explores the impact of global financial and economic crisis on the SEE region countries. Coccozza, Colabella, and Spadafora et al. (2011) analyze the impact of the global crisis on six South-Eastern European countries. Their main objective is to compare macro-financial conditions and policies in the run-up to the crisis, as well as to compare the policy responses to it, so as to highlight, *inter alia*, possible country-specific constraints. The results from their research show that the global crisis is at first instance transmitted

through a financial channel, in the form of lower and more costly external financing, and subsequently through a trade channel, via a significant decline in exports. Peter Sanfey et al. (2010) show how the crisis has evolved in the region, and why it was affected by developments that originated elsewhere. The study argues that the impact has been less harmful than many expected, and the observed resilience can be attributed in a large part to the mature and sensible reaction of the region itself. But it also points out the vital role played by international actors. This research concludes that the region is well-placed to take advantage of a future global upturn – whenever that might take place – but at growth rates that are likely to be subdued compared with those seen in the few years before the crisis. Will Bartlett and Vassilis Monastiriotis et al. (2010), Will Bartlett and Ivana Prica et al. (2012) highlighted that the global financial crisis was experienced as a huge external shock. Since the SEE banking systems were not directly exposed to ‘toxic assets’, the crisis was transmitted to the region through a number of indirect channels. These included a contraction of international trade, a sudden stop to credit growth, a rapid fall in inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), and a rapid fall in remittances from migrant workers, each reflecting the impact of the global crisis in financial markets, goods markets, capital markets and labor markets. It is notable that these mechanisms mattered to different degrees in different countries in the region. In common with other transition economies, the economies of South East Europe (SEE) have suffered from the impact of the global recession more than most other regions around the world, Mitra et al. (2009).

3. THE MAIN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF SEE COUNTRIES

One of the possible approaches in estimating the impact of global economic crisis to the SEE economies is by exploring the key macroeconomic indicators i.e. GDP growth, inflation and unemployment rates, as synthetic indicators of economic performance.

A comparative longitudinal analysis of levels and relative changes (rates of economic dynamics), before and after crisis, could shed more light on the interplay between GDP growth and its determinants. Aggregate macroeconomic relationships might be interceded by intermediary variables or exogenous interventions.

In the period 2008-2011 (table 1.), Albania and the Republic of Macedonia, registered comparatively high growth rates of 4% and 2% respectively, in the period 2008-2011 and have suffered comparatively minor negative consequences of economic crisis. On the other hand R. Macedonia and Serbia are countries which in the crisis and after crisis period have lowered the unemployment rate by 2.4% and 9.7% on the average, while other countries in the region (except Albania) registered unemployment increase. Albania and Macedonia, in this period, have shown high price stability i.e. inflation rates of 3.15% and 3.24% respectively.

Table 1 Key macroeconomic variables (2008-2011)

	Rate of economic growth <i>per capita</i> (%)					Average inflation rate, (%)	Rate of unemployment increase (%) 2008-2011	Rate of unemployment reduction, (%) 2002-2011
	2008	2009	2010	2011	Average			
Albania	7.30	2.93	3.13	2.63	4.00	3.15	0.76	2.4
Bulgaria	6.71	-5.02	1.08	2.49	1.31	5.21	5.65	6.1
Croatia	2.13	-6.84	-1.16	0.24	-1.41	2.94	5.4	1.5
Republic of Macedonia	4.71	-1.12	1.59	2.87	2.01	3.24	-2.4	0.6
Romania	9.59	-8.36	1.15	-0.14	0.56	6.33	1.6	1.04
Serbia	4.24	-3.11	1.36	2.43	1.23	9.46	-9.7	-9.9

Source: World Bank, EBRD, IMF, calculation of the authors.

The conclusions differ if these indicators were put into perspective of economic performance before the crisis, revealing feeble and fragile economic growth.

Table 2 Key macroeconomic variables (2002-2007) year

	Rate of economic growth <i>per capita</i> (%)							Average inflation rate (%)	Rate of unemployment increase (%)
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Average		
Albania	2.49	5.12	5.28	4.93	4.51	5.46	4.63	3.02	-2.6
Bulgaria	6.72	6.11	7.28	6.97	7.07	6.95	6.85	5.89	-10.5
Croatia	4.88	5.37	4.15	4.21	4.98	5.15	4.79	2.48	-5.42
Republic of Macedonia	0.55	2.53	4.36	4.09	4.77	5.90	3.70	1.48	3
Romania	6.69	5.50	8.69	4.42	8.13	6.20	6.60	11.7	-2
Serbia	4.17	2.94	9.56	5.72	4.01	5.83	5.37	9.37	4.3

Source: World Bank, EBRD, IMF, calculation of the authors.

4. ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF TRANSMISSION MECHANISM FOR CRISIS SPILL-OVER IN THE SEE REGION

The main postulates on which the growth pattern of the SEE countries has been based before the crisis (increased demand for exports, increased inflow of remittances initially caused by increased labour demand on the European labour markets and increased outflow of workers, increased FDI inflow in the region and dramatic credit expansion to the private sector, related to a increased penetration of foreign banks in the domestic banking sector) where exactly the key mechanisms for European economic crisis spill over to peripheral economies.

Several economies in the region were seriously affected by underlining negative implications of the global economic crisis, compared to a small group of countries impacted by the crisis in a relatively restrained intensity. The differences in initial conditions before the crisis are the major reason for various divergences in the strength and intensity of its impact on the SEE economies. Economies diverge in the institutional framework built up in the transitional and post transitional period, as well as, the degree of integration into the world and EU economy. The economies which had success in building up a comprehensive institutional framework and have

integrated more successfully into the world economy are the countries with strong economic dynamics. These economies took advantage of the possibilities created by the favourable economic environment before the crisis. On the other hand, the economies whose institutional progress has been slothful in the transitional process, characterized with incomplete and sporadic economic reforms, retained low competitiveness of their economies, political instability and low integration into the EU.

Before embarking on more thorough analysis of different initial structural conditions, as well as, its influence on transmission mechanisms of external shocks, it is useful, throughout econometric analysis to identify the relative importance of transmission channels for the overall group of countries.¹ (Appendix 1., Descriptive statistics).

OLS cross country panel regression provides for a practical approach for analysis of several determinants (FDI inflow per capita, export share as an approximation of the degree of openness of the economy and its level of competitiveness and the banking credits to the domestic private sector), as main determinants of economic growth in the period 1993-2011.

The econometric model has the following structure:

$$\log(y)_{it} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \log Export_{it} + \gamma_2 \log FDI_{it} + \gamma_3 Remittance_{it} + \gamma_4 \log Bankcredit_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

The left side of the equation articulate the rate of economic growth as independent variable, expressed in terms of logarithmic difference between GDP per capita in different time periods. On the right side are independent variables as determinants of economic growth for analysed group of SEE countries, in the period 1993-2011 (FDI inflows, exports, remittances, and bank credits to the domestic private sector and households)².

In the Table below we present the estimated results of global economic crisis impact on SEE countries through the main transmission channels and mechanisms by using OLS, Fixed effects model and Random effects model.

¹ Six countries are included in the model: Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria.

² The database is composed by combination of sources from relevant specialised agencies and international institutions: World bank, IMF, EBRD international institution

Table 3 Econometric estimation of global economic crisis impact on SEE region by using (OLS, FE, RE)

	OLS Panel	Fixed-effects	Random-effects
DEPENDENT VARIABLES: Log of real GDP per capita	regression	(within) regression	GLS regression
	(1)	(2)	(3)
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES			
Foreign Direct Investment	0.307 (0.052)	0.372** (0.030)	0.331** (0.009)
Remittance	0.219*** (0.074)	0.180** (0.061)	
Export	0.452*** (0.0346)	1.295** (0.000)	0.548** (0.000)
Bank credit to private sector	0.099** (0.251)	0.637 (0.197)	0.197** (0.125)
Constant	6.481* (0.056)	3.351** (0.125)	6.866** (0.000)
Observations	65	65	65
R-squared	0.607	0.573	0.629
Standard errors in parentheses			
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

The obtained regression results illustrate the strongest influence of export on the rate of economic growth in the analysed period³. This conclusion is derivate from the fact that the group of countries in our sample is comprised by small, open economies, whose growth potential was driven by expanding export activities.

$$g_{it} = 6.481 + 0.45 \log Ex_{it} + 0.307 \log FDI_{it} + 0.219 \log Remit_{it} + 0.099 \log Bank_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

Partial correlation between export and economic growth is statistically highly significant – an export increase by 1% would contributed to 0.45% increase in the rate of economic growth.⁴

The inflow of FDI has the same degree of importance for economic growth, taking into consideration that these countries do not sufficiently have recourses for financing their own capital accumulation, including positive effect that FDI bring with (technology transfer, management techniques, organizational skill etc.). Export growth and FDI are tightly bonded because economic activities of FDI are export oriented.

The regression results show that an increase of FDI for 1 % would increase the rate of economic growth for 0.307%. This partial correlation is also statistically

³ By application of OLS panel model

⁴ This is indicated by the 1.93 coefficient of the t-statistics, with a level significance of 0.05 (statistically significant p-value of 0.000).

significant.⁵ Rather less important and low significant is the linkage between banking credits and economic growth, compared to the influence of FDI and export. The explanation could be due to the uncompetitive domestic private sector, the lack of business ideas, entrepreneurial activities and initiatives of the domestic economy. Unlikely the export and the FDI, the intensity of the influence of foreign remittances and banking credits towards the private sector has weaker dynamic. Growth of foreign remittances by 1% would change the economic growth more dynamic for 0.19%. The banking credits to the private sector are registered as the weakest transmission mechanism in SEE economies. This conclusion can be reconfirmed by the fact that banking credits are statistically insignificant, compared to the rate of economic growth in SEE countries in the analyzed period i.e. the lowest range of statistical significance for the independent variable in the regression model. The statistical verification are elaborated and interpreted in details below in Appendix.⁶

4.1. Banking sector and credit growth

Global restriction of banking credits especially for those economics that have significant ownership of foreign banks in the domestic banking sector, represented significant transmission mechanism in the crisis spill over towards peripheral economics in Europe. International banks in search for higher income, in the period before the crisis were highly interested in taking part, mainly through banks acquisitions, in economies with less developed financial system. Hence, bigger banking groups, by taking over already existing banks, or by installing their own affiliations very easily, and for relatively short period of time, managed to expand their operations in the domestic banking sectors in many countries in SEE.

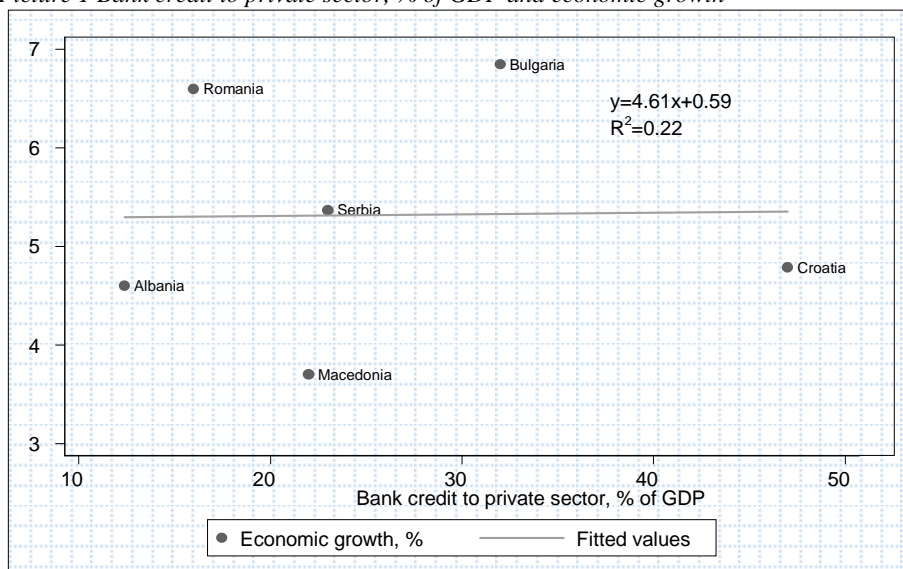
Increased demand for credits and penetration of foreign banks in domestic banking sectors, as a logical answer to global financial liberalization, significantly increased the percentage of banking credits to private sector before the crisis in almost every SEE country.

In addition, we present graphical display to interpret the impact of bank credit as a factor of economic growth in the countries of SEE. As results based on econometric estimations that we have made within our research, quantify the correlation between bank credit to the private sector and economic growth, graphical presentation only visually verify econometric results.

⁵ The significance of the relationship between FDI and economic growth indicated by the t-test, 1.87, with trust interval 95%.

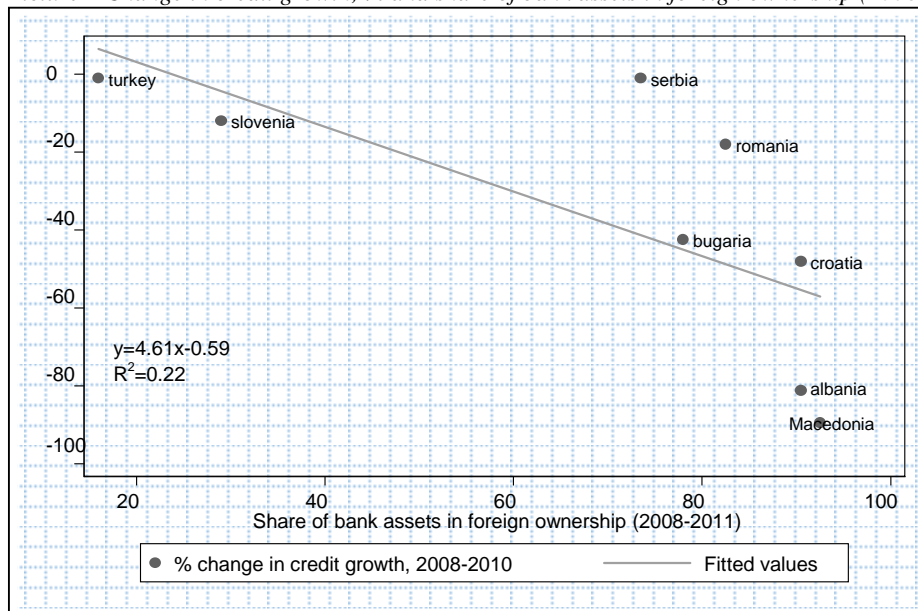
⁶Statistical description of variables, correlation matrix, kernel density histogram and Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, specification test of the regression model, Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity and Cameron & Trivedi's decomposition of IM-test, Variance inflation factor test for multicollinearity.

Picture 1 Bank credit to private sector, % of GDP and economic growth



The reasons for the drastic reduction of bank loans during the global crisis maybe could be found in the participation of foreign capital in the domestic banking sector. The countries with the largest share of foreign capital in domestic bank sector are precisely the countries that have experienced major turbulence in credit activities during the crisis. Most dramatic decline in bank loans was recorded in the Republic of Macedonia and Albania, which de facto are most represented countries with participation of foreign banks, against Turkey and Slovenia mildly significant financial impact due to domestic capital represented in the national banking sectors.

Picture 2 Change in credit growth, % and share of bank assets in foreign ownership (2008-2011)

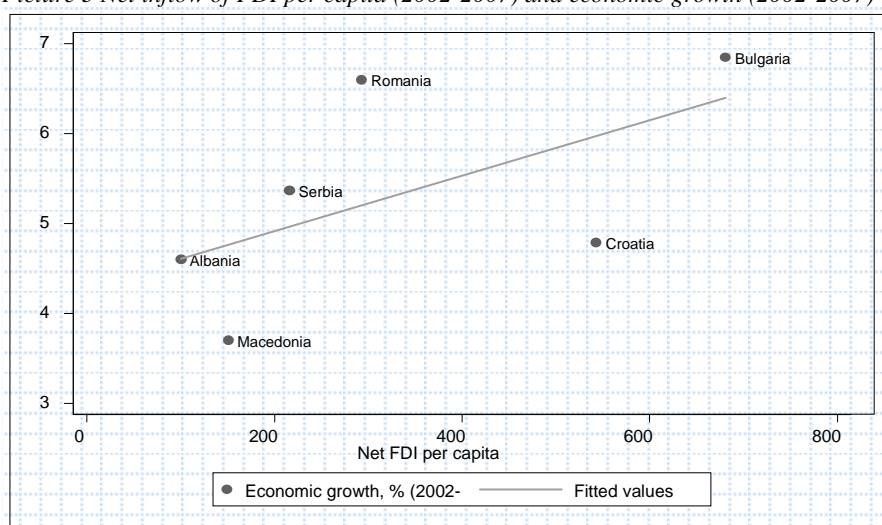


4.2. FDI and Economic growth

The fact that the economic growth in larger number of SEE countries before the crisis was based on FDI, indicates the vulnerability upon the changes in the FDI flows towards their economies. One of the transmission mechanisms through which the global economic crisis has shaken up investment and growth fundamentals of peripheral economies was the drastic reduction of the FDI flows. The intensity of negative trends impact of FDI on the performance of individual economies vary greatly because of different initial conditions before the crisis. Those economies that registered the largest FDI inflows before the crisis in seeking growth, were the countries that were most affected by the global economic crisis by the drastic reduction in FDI.

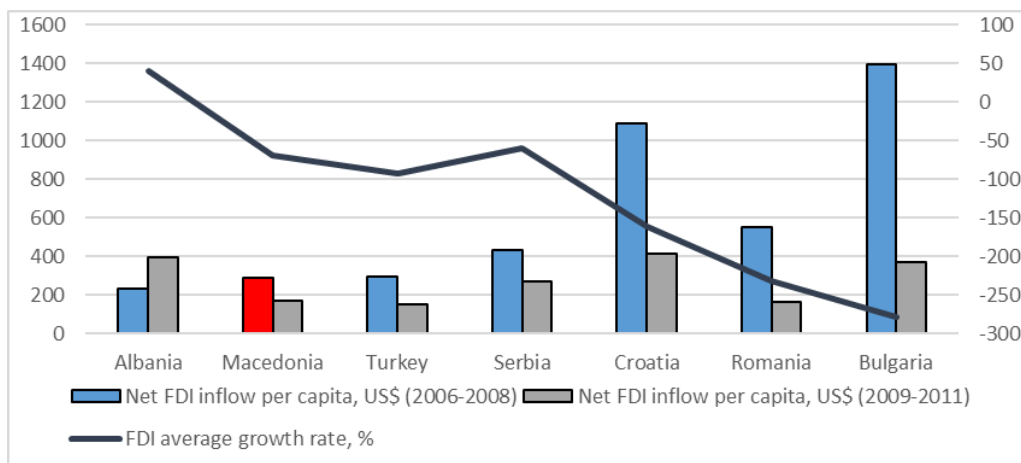
Econometric analysis using panel regression for the period 2002-07 underscore the above dominant features of growth model of SEE economies. The results show that there is a strong statistical correlation between FDI inflows and the positive growth rate, whereby the increase in the net inflow of FDI per capita by 1% means increase in the growth rate of GDP per capita of 0.47%. The degree of determination only confirms that the econometric model that analyzes the impact of FDI on the growth rate is functional.

Picture 3 Net inflow of FDI per capita (2002-2007) and economic growth (2002-2007)



The graphical presentation on a scatter plot visualizes the positive partial correlation and interdependence between FDI inflows per capita and the rate of economic growth. The countries that have managed to attract higher levels of FDI, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia are those countries that before the crisis were economies with the most dynamic growth. It could be stated also that these countries had higher degree of financial integration into the international financial markets. Unlike them, the Republic of Macedonia and Albania, registered rather sluggish FDI *per capita* inflows, and therefore had relatively slower economic growth.

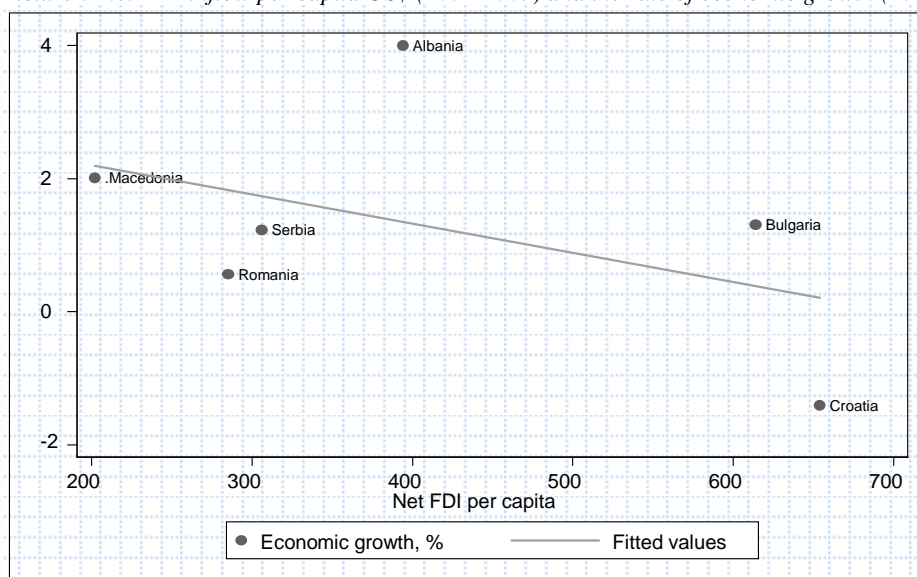
Picture 4 Net FDI inflow per capita (2002-2007) and the rate of economic growth (2008-2011)



Source: EBRD и World Bank

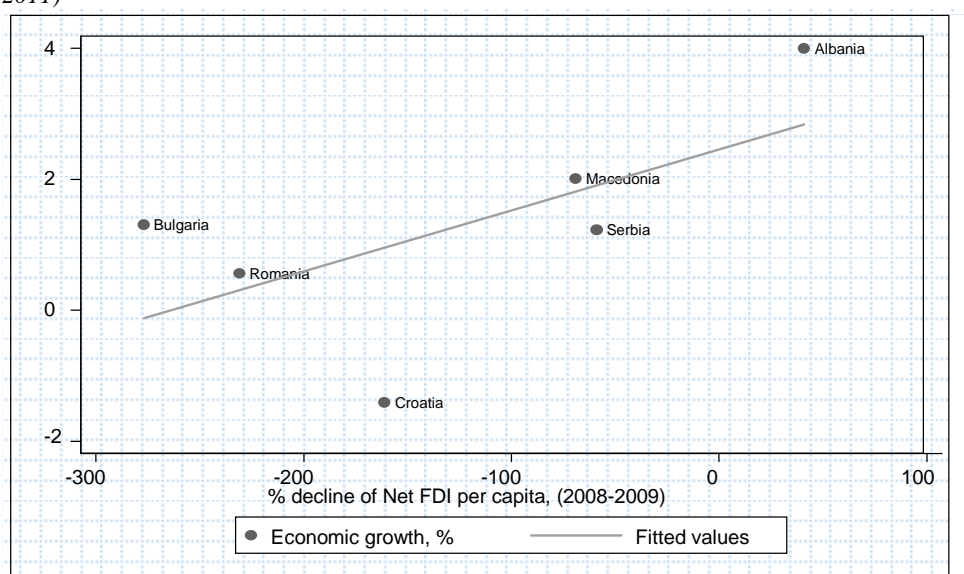
Within the global trend of reduction in FDI as a consequence of the global economic crisis, the positive trend of FDI in SEE was virtually drastically reduced. The scatter plot represents the relation between FDI inflows per capita in the period 2002-2007 and the average growth rate for the period after the crisis of 2008-2011.

Picture 5 Net FDI inflow per capita US\$ (2002-2007) and the rate of economic growth (2008-2011)



The graph below shows the positive correlation between the rate of decline in FDI and the rate of economic growth during the crisis. Countries that experienced the smallest decline in FDI had the best economic performance during the crisis.

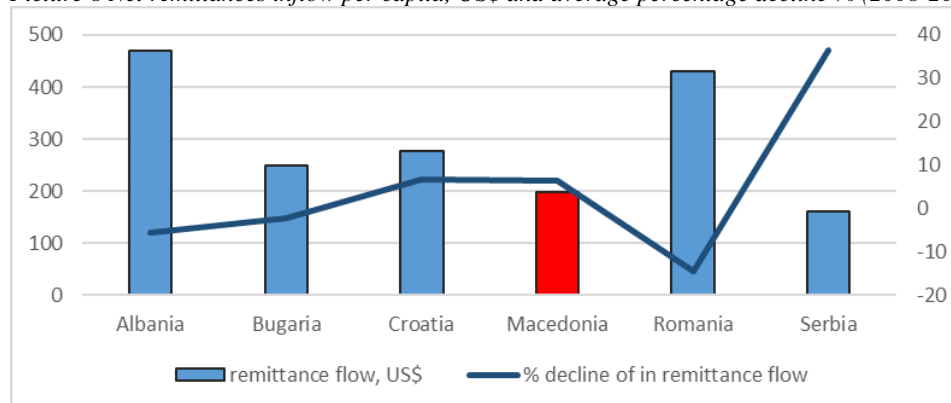
Picture 7 Rate of FDI decline of FDI per capita (2008-2009) and the rate of economic growth (2008-2011)



4.3. Remittances and Economic growth

Remittances are an important transmission mechanism for global economic crisis spillover in the SEE countries. The share of remittances in GDP has been traditionally relatively large, the fact that underlines the importance of remittances in maintaining the balance of payments position and domestic aggregate demand. Increased integration of SEE countries in the EU legal and economic environment, including the visa regime liberalization, widened the opportunity for intense migration of workers. The growing labor demand in EU into precrisis period and the large outflow of workers from the countries in the region contributed to a large remittances flow to these countries. Countries that have registered upward trend of remittances in the pre crisis period faced rapid decline in their volume in the period of crisis.

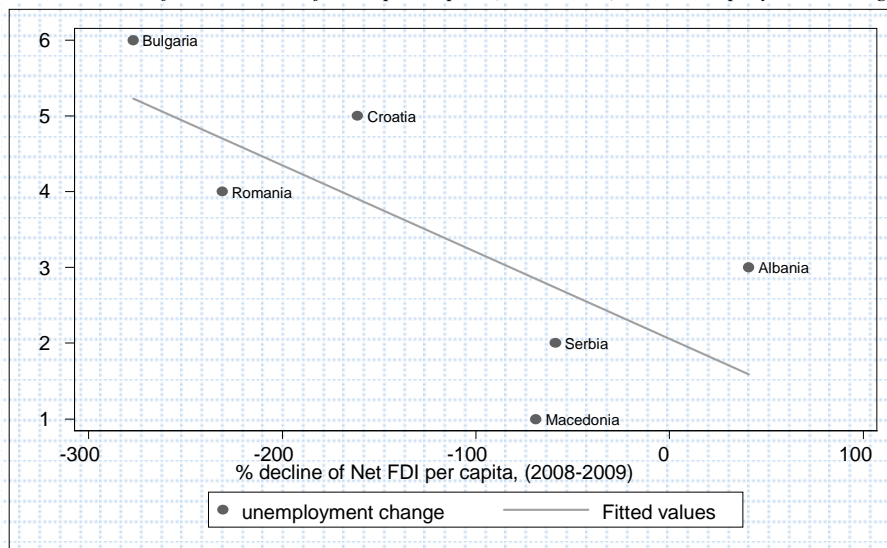
Picture 8 Net remittances inflow per capita, US\$ and average percentage decline % (2008-2011)



Source: World Bank remittances data base, own calculations

The importance of remittances to the economies of SEE could be analyzed by the balance of payments and the households sector consumption in correlation with the unemployment rate in SEE countries in terms of remittances. This task is difficult because besides remittances there are many factors that determinate the balance of payments and the household consumption, and in that context the identification of the individual impact of remittances is almost impossible. On the other hand, the analysis of the unemployment rate over the flow of remittances also faces many difficulties. For this purpose we have gone through an integrated approach to analyze the impact of remittances as a transmission mechanism for spillover of the crisis in SEE countries by including FDI as entities that have the greatest importance in the creation of new jobs in the region having in mind the rather uncompetitive domestic economies. As you can see the Scatter plot, there is a strong negative correlation between the rate of decline in FDI inflows in SEE region in the period of crisis and the decline in the unemployment rate which is logical and expected result if we have in mind the foregoing conclusions about the importance of the FDI to the region.

Picture 9 Rate of FDI decline of FDI per capita (2008-2009) and unemployment change



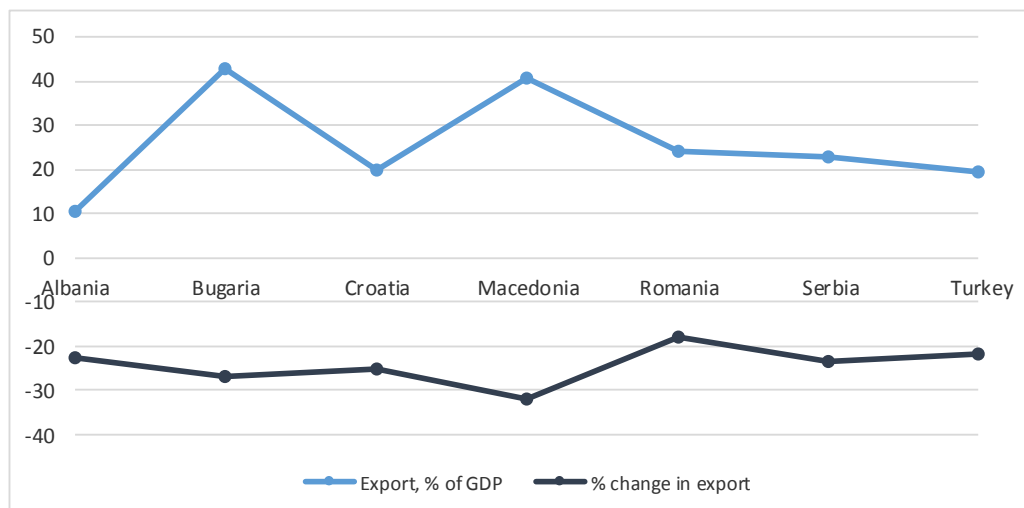
The deviations from the regression line could be explained through the impact of demand of migrant workers and inflow of remittances as approximate variable. Albania, though only increased the inflow of FDI during the crisis, however, increased unemployment of 0.76% while Serbia recorded a significant reduction in the rate of unemployment in terms of reduced inflow of FDI and that can be explained by a significant increase in inflow of remittances indicator which reflects the migration of workers abroad. The only increase in the unemployment rate that happened in Croatia can not be explained by analysis of remittances from abroad or by FDI, which suggests that the answer must be sought elsewhere. Macedonia and Romania had different results in terms of remittances and FDI inflows during the crisis, which is also evident in the unemployment rate. The Republic of Macedonia recorded an average increase of inflow of remittances of 6.5%, while Romania dropped by 14%, on the other hand, in Macedonia FDI dropped by 69% compared to an average reduction of FDI in Romania to 231%. This suggested the reasons why Macedonia had lower average unemployment rate of 2.4%, compared to Romania,

which saw an average increase in unemployment during the economic downturn of 1.6%.

4.4. Export demand and economic growth

Export demand from the EU as a major trading partner of the SEE countries is an important transmission mechanism of the crisis. The intensity of the impact of reduced export demand from the EU for the SEE countries was largely determined by the degree of trade integration of each country before the crisis.

Picture 10 Export as a percent of GDP and rate of decline of export in 2008-2009



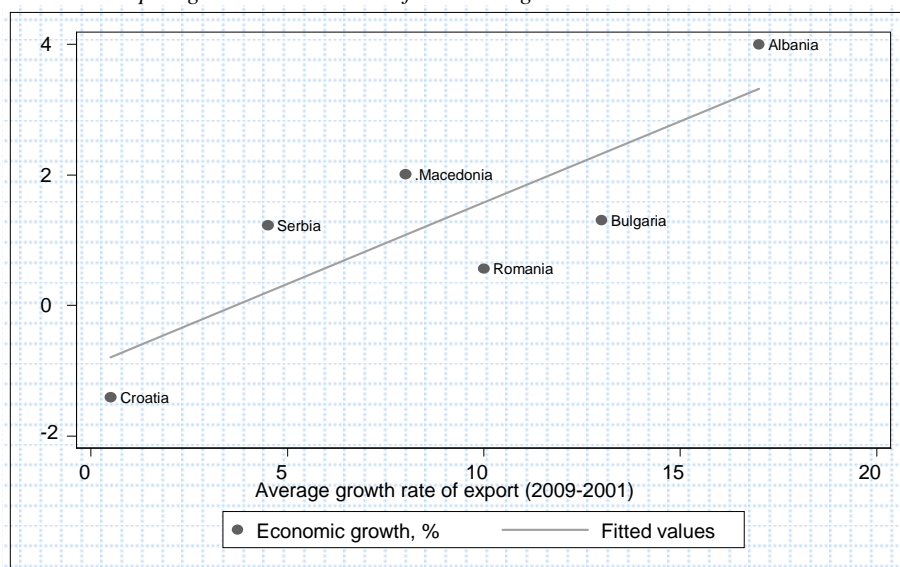
Source: World Bank remittances data base, own calculations

Economies with well built trade integration to the EU, expressed through share of exports in GDP experienced the largest decline in exports during the crisis compared to other economies in SEE.⁷

The positive correlation between the share of exports in GDP and the rate of decline in exports during the crisis is confirmed by the results of the regression that explains the reasons for the varying intensity of declining exports as share of exports in GDP.

⁷ For illustration, the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria as countries with the largest share of exports in GDP before the crisis saw the biggest percentage decline in export activities in the period 2008-2009, as a result of reduced export demand in the EU.

Picture 11 Export growth and the rate of economic growth



The fact that the SEE countries are heavily dependent on exports (particularly in the EU as the largest partner in the region), which is reflected by a relatively significant share of exports as a component of GDP, suggested the active role of exports in the economic performance of SEE countries.

5. CONCLUSION

The external shocks emanating from the crisis have caused downward output trends and macroeconomic instabilities with various amplitudes, due to different initial conditions, levels of openness and institutional response.

Some SEE economies have revealed a considerable resilience to external financial and trade shocks. Some countries of South-East Europe remain with ambiguous and fragile medium term economic prospects. Delayed reforms, low structural changes, external vulnerability, lack of foreign direct investment, declining competitiveness, high levels of corruption, seem to be accompanying the prolonged recession and aggravating the convergence towards European Union, medium and long term economic prospects.

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